

## A creative departure

*Painting provides enjoyable break from the corporate world*

By Stephanie Hounsell  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

She's totally free. Her yellow hair is flowing, her feet dancing and her legs sporting about a week's worth of hair growth.

In one hand she clutches a razor, while in the other she holds a tube of shaving cream as if she's "going off to the field to shave," laughed local artist Teri Van Sickle-Brown, describing her favourite painting.

"If I wanted to put a message in, it's be comfortable in your own skin," she said.

Humorously — and fittingly — the piece is entitled *Femininity*. It seems the very definition of "whimsical," which is the word Van Sickle-Brown uses most often to describe the style of a large portion of her work.

"To me, it makes you smile when you see it," she said. "It's fun, vibrant, graphic and light-hearted."

Her cheery paintings, done in acrylics, are a reflection of Van Sickle-Brown, who certainly enjoys a good laugh. But there's more than one side to this lifelong artist.

While her two children's bedroom walls are lined with fun, themed pieces — space for six-year-old Brody, a garden for three-year-old Ruby — in her living room is a 10-foot by six-foot abstract painting that's decidedly more serious and thought-provoking.

That painting, and her other abstracts, would be more reflective of the Van Sickle-Brown of the corporate world, where she works in marketing.

"I have two sides to me. There's the funny, sarcastic side and then in the business side, I'm very serious," she said.

These days, balance between those two sides seems to be a recurring theme for this



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**LETTING HER CREATIVE SIDE SHINE:** Teri Van Sickle-Brown displays a sampling of her whimsical acrylic paintings on both wood and canvas.

artist — both artistically and in normal, everyday life. With two kids, a husband and a busy career, Van Sickle-Brown said she finds time when she can for painting, usually on weekends and holidays.

Since she was eight years old, Van Sickle-Brown has been exploring her creative side, which she first discovered when she drew patterns found in her bedroom wallpaper.

Her parents nurtured that natural talent, giving her art supplies every Christmas, Van Sickle-Brown said, and she went on to the illustration program at Sheridan College.

She worked as a full-time artist for six years, but eventually realized things like health and dental benefits would be nice, not to mention a steady income.

Fortunately, she didn't have to sacrifice one for the other.

"Doing art on the side still gives me that break from my business life and I get to

indulge my creativity."

She's done a number of commissions, as well as participated in art shows.

As for which style she prefers to paint, she said she couldn't choose.

Her abstract pieces she creates to fill a certain spot in a home, whether it's hers or someone else's, taking into account the colours and styling of the room.

She paints layers upon layers until the piece is just right.

"That style, I don't know it's done until it's done," she said. "It's so free and so loose."

She also sometimes paints realist pieces.

Another creative outlet for Van Sickle-Brown is writing children's books. She currently has a series written and illustrated and is hoping to find an agent and publisher.

With her husband, Dave Brown, a graphic artist and web designer, creativity is a family affair.

"I love it. We make a good pair because we have the same ideas and are always on the same page," Van Sickle-Brown said.

Together, the couple runs [miltonsearch.com](http://miltonsearch.com).

As for Ruby and Brody, their parents are always on the lookout for budding artistic genius.

Although that has yet to be detected, Van Sickle-Brown said each of the kids has an appreciation for art — no doubt fostered by the many colourful pieces painted with love and hanging around their rooms.

Art is a huge part of her life, Van Sickle-Brown said.

"It's my passion and I love having that gift."

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